

Town of Bloomfield
Economic Development Commission Meeting
800 Bloomfield Avenue, Conference Room #5
DRAFT MINUTES
TUESDAY, August 23, 2016

Present: Jerry Long, Bonnie Bercowetz, Michelle Bononi, Fred Hesketh, and Richard McDermott
Not Present: Jerry Katrichis, Harold Harper,

Also present: Director of Planning and Economic Development, Jose' Giner, Don Poland, Mike Goman, Dave Driver, Town Manager Phil Schenck, Mayor Joan Gamble, Dale Bertoldi, Rick Hughes, David Mann and Laura James, Recording Secretary

1. Commissioner Bercowetz called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.
2. **Minutes of July 12, 2016 regular meeting**
Commissioner Bercowetz made a motion to accept the minutes of July 12, 2016 with a correction. Commissioner McDermott seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.
3. **Public Comment**
No comments
4. **Goman&York – update and preliminary thoughts on Town Center Parking**
Mr. Poland stated that the issue of parking was pushed forward and is only about halfway done. The preliminary findings are that parking is difficult and he will provide an update next month on shared parking and how other Towns manage their parking. Chairman Long asked if there was a time frame when recommendations will be completed. Mr. Poland stated that final recommendations will be to the Commission by the October meeting. Mr. Giner stated that the EDC could have a discussion with TPZ regarding any suggested changes to the parking regulations and be placed on an agenda for a hearing.
5. **Goman&York – presentation on Economic Development Visioning and Strategic Planning Session**
Mr. Goman stated that for the Visioning and Strategic Planning Session, there would be two sessions, two hours each session, one on a week night and that same session would repeat on a Saturday to accommodate those who cannot make the weeknight meeting. The first item would be an introduction to the EDC and what it's all about. Secondly, would be the Rules, not focusing on complaints or revisiting past history. Next item to be covered would be a participation session, where people would call out a priority of what the Town should focus on.
Each Session would be about forty minutes and the Session should end up with about thirty priorities. Afterward the participants would get to vote on the top five priorities.
The goal is to get community participation and get people talking - which leads to a very positive and interesting dialogue.
The goal is to get about Forty people on a weeknight and forty people on a Saturday night. The following week, participants come back and have a wrap up session based on the votes and present the top five priorities.

The last task would be to see who will be assigned to do each task. Mr. Goman stated that they have done a lot of these Sessions and they have gone well. Commissioner Bercowetz asked if Town Officials participation would be limited. Mr. Goman stated that they have never limited participation of Town Officials. Mr. Goman stated that they will have Referees in each Session that will facilitate to prevent someone from dominating the conversation

Commissioner Bercowetz expressed her skepticism of sessions being done and nothing coming out of them. Mr. Goman stated that the hope is that initiatives come out of the sessions with five smaller tasks that can be done quickly.

Commissioner Bononi asked if the EDC will have the opportunity to respond to Mr. Goman's suggestions and when is the appropriate time to do so. Chairman Long stated that the time is now if the EDC wishes to proceed with the Visioning Session.

Commissioner McDermott asked who will assign the tasks and who will be assigned to work on each task. Mr. Goman stated that the group should include the EDC, Mr. Giner, and the Town Manager. The EDC should assign each task to the appropriate party, while trying to avoid a majority of tasks going to one person.

Commissioner Bononi stated that it sounds like a nice exercise but was concerned if the time is right for it. She felt that the EDC's focus should be on what the EDC's purpose is and come up with a targeted work plan. Commissioner Bononi further stated that the big priority is to have EDC define its purpose. She felt that the EDC should look into using Goman & York's resources better by obtaining new business such as high tech manufacturing.

Commissioner Bercowetz stated that the EDC needs to go over by-laws, Town Regulations, and look at the Chamber of Commerce Study done in 1980's and focus on the entire community. Ms. Bercowetz stated that one thing that come out of the 330 Park Avenue and the Library discussions was the issue of East Side vs. West Side of the Town which is an old scenario and being somewhat divided by socio-economic factors as well as demographically. There was further discussion regarding what EDC's focus should be.

Commissioner Bononi made a motion that in view of the presentation by the Consultants and the comments of the Commission that any consideration of the Economic Development Visioning and Strategic Planning Session be postponed and/or delayed by EDC until such time EDC has had opportunity to conduct its own targeted program.

Discussion of Motion

Commissioner McDermott asked that if the community comes up with five priorities, isn't this bringing some focus to the EDC? Mr. McDermott stated that he agrees with getting clarity for the EDC but why not do both.

Commissioner Bercowetz stated that she is concerned with raising expectations and then something gets stuck in a binder. Mr. Goman stated that they will work with the EDC to come up with a mission statement in the next 60 to 90 days and work plan and then revisit the Visionary Plan next year as a second step.

Commissioner Bononi stated that the EDC meets for one and half hours and when you add another project everyone should be realistic of the commitment and be willing to revisit the Priority Session later and proceed from there.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bercowetz and the motion passed. Chairman Long voted negative. Chairman Hesketh abstained.

Chairman Long stated that he heard some code words as the EDC was having a discussion, which was East of the track and West of the track, which is the reason he voted no. Commissioner Bononi asked what the code words are. Chairman Long stated that the code words are black and white and he resents it. There was further discussion regarding east and west side of Town. Commissioner Bercowetz stated that she felt race is tied in because of socio-economic factors.

Mr. Schenck stated that monies were put in budget to put in a streetscape plan for Lower Blue Hills Avenue and the plan is pretty well completed. State Representative David Baram had the State designate \$500,000 dollars for the streetscape plan and the money was not released because of the State budget cuts, but hopefully will put back in for next year. He felt that the EDC could focus on a Business Visitation Program and putting an Abatement Policy together by either revising or reaffirming the policy which has been controversial in the community with Niagara Bottling. He stated that the issue of Tax Abatements is a common issue nationwide. Mr. Schenck further stated that there is a short list of activities that EDC can work on.

Commissioner Bononi stated that she has a strong exception to comments made about code words being used, and does not feel they were relevant to the discussion.

Commissioner Bononi made a motion that the EDC in conjunction with its consultants formulate a plan to target specific objectives for the EDC to adopt no later than December 31, 2016 with details to be worked out between EDC and the Consultants. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McDermott and passed. Chairman Long abstained.

6. Goman+York – general updates on Economic Development Activities (various topics)

Mr. Rowson stated that there was not a meeting of the Bloomfield Center Business Alliance in July. The June meeting was expanded to include Geisslers Plaza and the meeting was very well attended. The August meeting was a planning meeting looking forward to the Fall. He reported that the group is embarking on second brochure. The next meeting is September 19, which will be a wine tasting at Crystal Wines. Mr. Rowson stated that it was the goal of the BCBA to have social and community interactions every quarter.

Commissioner Bercowetz asked if a decision maker for the Wintonbury Mall was ever in Town. Mr. Goman stated that they are in contact with their broker quite a bit. Chairman Long asked why the EDC doesn't invite him to the meeting. Mr. Giner stated that he has been invited and encouraged in the past to meet and formally sit down with EDC and present his vision.

Commissioner Bercowetz made a motion for the EDC to formally invite the Owner of the Wintonbury Mall to come and discuss any potential problems or issues. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bononi and passed unanimously.

Mr. Poland stated that alcohol separations and tax abatements have a wide range of differences, and there needs to be more discussion with the Town. Mr. Driver stated that he is worried that if the tax abatement issues come up the Town will not know what to do. The Land Use/Economic development subcommittee, the Finance subcommittee, and the EDC should discuss possible tax abatements policy as quickly as possible.

Mr. Driver reported on a case where a new business had announced that it might be located in Windsor. Some questioned if and why Bloomfield was not asked. He stated that the EDC should have confidence that the Town's brokers were in the game, whether or not we won the project.

Commissioner Bononi asked what Mr. Driver was looking for from the EDC for timely concerns. Mr. Driver stated that he is looking for the Town to resolve the issues of incentives and/or tax abatement. Work out a program and come up with a policy. Mr. Giner stated that he has done research and EDC can take a look at the recommendations. Mr. Driver stated that the Town Council would like to hear the EDC's recommendations. There was further discussion regarding making abatement recommendations to the Town Council. Mr. Giner stated that he has looked at various policies and will have recommendation for next meeting.

Mr. Goman stated that he attended the Chamber of Commerce, Taste of Bloomfield and it was very well attended. Mr. Goman stated that they will attend the Northeast Economic Development Annual Conference in New Haven. Mr. Goman further stated that information has shown a significant leakage of general merchandise retailers, and vast the majority is because there isn't a Walmart or Target in Town.

Mr. Giner stated that the expected completion of the Town Center apartments is Spring of 2018.

Mr. Schenck stated that the Filley Park Project has ran into some issues with the Army Corp of Engineers and that the Town was working to get the permit renewed. He also stated that he would be meeting with staff on the geese problem at Filley Pond Park. Mr. Schenck stated that the bids for the first phase of the Greenway were delayed due to issues with property lines so construction may be delayed until Fall. He further reported that a meeting had been scheduled with property owners on Mountain Avenue where the Town will be putting in sidewalks.

Mr. Schenck stated that he has a call in to Robert Schwartz regarding the hardware store. He reported that there will be two major projects on the November ballot - the renovation of the Public Works building which is 11.6 million dollars and the replacement of the 1959 Junior High School housing, Leisure, Youth and Senior Services with a new building at a cost of approximately 22.3 million dollars.

Mr. Hesketh asked if something be done with all the equipment on the railroad. Mr. Schenck spoke with Mr. Bellevue and he stated that it may take until November or next Spring to completely replace the tracks. There was further discussion regarding the railroad project.

7. Public Comment

Mr. Dale Bertoldi, 52 Duncaster Road stated that the EDC should take a look at TIF financing as a potential incentive.

Mr. David Mann stated that this had been an informative meeting and that the Tax Abatement issue is really key. Glad to hear the connectivity of the apartments and Town Center and plans needs to be worked out.

Chairman Long stated that the next meeting should be allotted for two hours 8:30 to 10:30

8. Adjournment

Commissioner Bononi made a motion to adjourn at 10:05 a.m. Motion was seconded by Commissioner McDermott and passed unanimously.